METHOD FOR ASSESSING FOOD PALATABILITY AND PREFERENCE IN ANIMALS USING A COGNITIVE PALATABILITY ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Abstract

Embodiments of the invention relate to a novel approach for determining the palatability, or preference, of foods, food stuffs, or veterinary biologics in animals. This approach provides a robust and reliable means of assessing palatability in animals using a cognitive palatability assessment protocol. The basic protocol utilizes a discrimination learning procedure, in which animals are presented with three simultaneous stimuli, such as objects, odors, sounds, digital pictures or projections, etc., and are allowed to respond to one, although any number of stimuli may be employed. The response is then recorded including metadata such as the rate of learning, response rate and response order for example. Depending on the animal's choice, the response will typically result in the animal receiving no reward, or either of two particular foods, food stuffs or veterinary biologics. The animal's response

selection is indicative of a preference for one food, food stuff or veterinary biologic over the other and is indicative of the palatability of one food, food stuff or veterinary biologic in comparison to the other. This method requires the use of fewer animals than alternative approaches and may prove healthier for animals that do not self-limit their food consumption.